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Lincoln Room

LETTER

FROM

MR. RODNEY,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

The Report of a Select Committee,

To examine the Reports of the Secretary of the Treasury, in relation to the

Examination of the Land Offices.

APRIL 29, 1822.

Read, and ordered to lie upon the table.

WASHINGTON:

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1822.

April 27, 1822.

SIR: In a report made to the House of Representatives by the select committee, to whom were referred several communications from the Secretary of the Treasury, relative to the manner in which the land offices have been examined, it is stated,

“The committee believe it to have been usual in the War Department, also, to employ members of Congress, as counsel in behalf of the United States, and they refer particularly to the instances of Mr. Baldwin, of the House of Representatives, and Mr. Rodney, of Delaware, of the Senate, employed and paid as counsel, under the direction of the present Secretary of War.”

With respect to myself, an error has been, unintentionally, committed; as I was not, when employed, or paid, a member of Congress, either of the Senate, or of the House of Representatives. This will appear from the sequel. On the 6th of March, 1820, I received a letter from Major Babcock, of the corps of engineers, who was stationed at New Castle, requesting my professional services, in the case of an ejectment brought for the Pea Patch, the trial of which was expected to take place at Trenton, in the circuit court of the United States, for the district of New Jersey, on the first of April following. Agreeably to his desire, I attended the court; but the trial was postponed, in consequence of the absence of material witnesses on the part of the defendant. Rules were obtained for taking their depositions, and also for a special jury, and for a survey of the disputed premises.

In the summer of 1820, a detailed report of the case was prepared and transmitted to the Department of War. At the October term, in the same year, I attended again, at Trenton; and was there on the day of the general election in Delaware, when representatives to the seventeenth, or present Congress were chosen. The result, however, was not known, until some days after my return.

In the month of November, following, I was paid for the services rendered, and I have not, since, been at the court. The constitutional term of the present House of Representatives, commenced on the 4th of March, 1821. Until that period arrived, I was not a member of Congress, and might have held any other incompatible office, under the constitution of the United States, or of Delaware.

The legislature of the state of Delaware chose me a Senator of the United States on the 10th of January last; but the certificate of my election was not received, in consequence of my absence from severe indisposition, until the 24th of that month, when I took my seat in the Senate.

This simple narrative of facts, given according to the best of my recollection, assisted by the original papers lately received, is respectfully submitted to the consideration of the House of Representatives, with the view of correcting any erroneous impressions which may have been made, by the unintentional mistake of so respectable a committee.

I have the honor to be, &c.

C. A. RODNEY.

Hon. P. P. BARBOUR,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.